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Section 4 Agency Coordination and Public Involvement

SECTION 4

Agency Coordination and Public Involvement

IDOT provided regular opportunities for residents of the project area, local government officials, and state and federal agencies to become familiar with and participate in the IL 29 study through a structured coordination and communication program designed to encourage input. Participation was open to any interested persons. No one was excluded because of income, race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, or handicap. This section summarizes the agency coordination and public involvement activities that occurred during preparation of this document, including the early coordination process, coordination activities with resource agency officials, and meetings with area officials, interested groups, and the public.

4.1 Early Coordination

4.1.1 Cooperating Agencies

The Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS for the project appeared in the *Federal Register* on July 24, 2002. In August and September 2002, a preliminary scoping document was mailed to federal and state agencies. State and federal agencies that agreed to serve as cooperating agencies for the project include the USEPA, USACE, USFWS, IDOA, and IDNR.

On August 29, 2002, the USEPA responded to the scoping document by recommending development of the EIS. Appendix A contains the coordination letters under Early Coordination (Agency Scoping Packet). The letter recommended that the EIS be developed so as to include a purpose and need statement, include a comprehensive analysis of a sufficient number of reasonable alternatives, describe the affected environment, describe government-owned resources in the Peoria Wilds in the affected environment, avoid impacts to the government-owned resources and other resources in the Peoria Wilds, describe all possible impacts caused by the reasonable alternatives, estimate impacts caused by induced growth, and analyze potential cumulative impacts, if any.

4.2 State and Federal Agency Coordination

4.2.1 NEPA / 404 Process

The project was coordinated under the Statewide Implementation Agreement for Concurrent National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)/404 Process, which was designed to involve key agencies early and to avoid possible oversights. The process involved regular meetings between state and federal resource agencies to discuss the project. The NEPA/404 process involved two formal concurrence points: purpose and need, and alternatives to be carried forward and reasonable range of alternatives.¹ Appendix A contains documentation

¹ Concurrence means written determination that information is adequate to agree that the project can be advanced to the next stage of the project development; and agencies agree not to revisit the previous process steps unless conditions change.

of activities and correspondence relating to the process under State and Federal Agency Coordination: NEPA/404 Merger Process.

On April 19, 2002, IDOT held an interagency meeting with FHWA, USEPA, USFWS, IDNR, and the USACE to discuss the differences between this study and the Heart of Illinois study, which included a corridor to the west of the project area. IDOT explained that the current study focuses on connecting the 4-lane facilities north and south of IL 29 to enhance transportation efficiency for local and regional traffic west of the Illinois River, whereas the Heart of Illinois study investigated regional traffic connections between Peoria and I-39 and I-55. IDOT also requested agency concurrence to use a new format for the EIS, which combined the affected environment and impact discussions by resource topic in one chapter. All the cooperating agencies agreed to the new EIS format.

On April 28, 2003, IDOT held the first merged NEPA/Section 404 meeting to discuss the project and to obtain concurrence for “purpose and need” and “alternatives selected to be carried forward.” In addition to IDOT, agencies in attendance included FHWA, USEPA, USFWS, and IDNR. At the meeting, the group concurred with the purpose of and need for the project and the alternatives recommended for further study. IDNR also requested that the eagle habitat and natural areas within IDOT’s right of way near Miller-Anderson Woods Nature Preserve be looked at closely and avoided to the extent practicable. A separate meeting was held on April 25, 2003, with the USACE covering the same issues as at the April 28 meeting. The USACE concurred with the purpose of and need for the project and the alternatives recommended for further study.

On March 1, 2005, IDOT conducted the project’s second merged NEPA/Section 404 meeting to update agencies on the project alternatives, and to obtain input and concurrence on alternatives to be evaluated in detail in the Draft EIS. As part of the alternatives update, IDOT recommended eliminating the Bluff Alignment from further consideration because it would not “attract” enough traffic to address transportation problems on existing IL 29 and thus not meet the project’s purpose and need (see Section 2). Agencies in attendance besides IDOT included FHWA, USEPA, USFWS, IDNR, and USACE. The interagency group deferred concurrence on eliminating the Bluff Alignment until they received more information on how future traffic volumes along existing IL 29 and the Bluff Alignment were determined. IDOT prepared a memorandum discussing the traffic volumes associated with improvements on IL 29 and the Bluff Alignment and sent it to the agencies on April 26, 2005. On May 31, 2005, the agencies concurred with the memorandum’s recommendation that the Bluff Alignment be eliminated from further consideration.

4.2.2 Resource Agency Technical Committee

A Technical Advisory Committee comprising local, state, and federal resource agencies was formed at the beginning of the project. The committee included representatives from the agencies listed in Table 4-1. The role of committee members was to

TABLE 4-1
Resource Agency Technical Committee Membership

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency ^a
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service ^a
U.S. Army Corp of Engineers ^a
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
University of Illinois–ITARP
Illinois Department of Agriculture
Illinois Department of Natural Resources ^a
Illinois Natural History Survey
Bureau County Farm Bureau
Marshall-Putnam Farm Bureau
Peoria County Farm Bureau

^aAlso participates in the NEPA/404 process.

communicate regulatory requirements associated with resources in the study area, to provide input on alternatives and impacts, and to review technical aspects of the study.

Five resource agency technical committee meetings were held during the study to discuss project progress and to provide input at key project decision points. Table 4-2 summarizes the meetings. Appendix A contains the meeting minutes under State and Federal Agency Coordination: Resource Agency Technical Committee.

TABLE 4-2
Technical Advisory Committee Meetings

Meeting	Topics
September 2002	Introduction to study, roles of committee members, summary of environmental features in the study area, overview of studies under way (biological surveys, archaeological investigations, boundaries of natural areas, land and water reserve and nature preserves, bird surveys), and preliminary alignments
November 2002	Process for developing and refining alternative alignments, review of typical sections near Miller-Anderson Woods Nature Preserve, project need considerations, designated IDNR properties in the study area (such as natural areas, nature preserves), and preliminary alternative alignments
May 2003	Review of purpose and need and of alternative alignments in the north, central, and south sections to be carried through the EIS
January 2004	Summary of input from Public Information Meeting 1 and NEPA/404 Meeting 1, overview of field studies, overview/status of preliminary alternative alignments, summary of alternative impacts, and review of next steps in the process
June 2004	Current resource studies, refinements to the alternative alignments in the north, central and south sections, review of alternatives to minimize impacts in Senachwine Creek and Crow Creek floodplains, wildlife crossings, and next steps in the process

A technical memorandum providing background information on the indirect and cumulative impact analysis to be completed for the project was distributed to cooperating agency representatives following the June 2004 meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee to solicit input and concurrence on the proposed methodology and geographical boundaries for the analysis. The feedback provided by the USEPA and USACE was taken into consideration during the assessment of indirect and cumulative impacts; see State and Federal Agency Coordination: Resource Agency Technical Committee in Appendix A .

4.2.3 Other Agency Coordination

IDOT corresponded with and held several meetings with various local, state and federal agencies. Table 4-3 summarizes the results of that coordination. Meeting minutes and correspondence can be found in Appendix A under State and Federal Agency Coordination: Other Agency Coordination.

TABLE 4-3
Other Agency Coordination

Meeting/ Correspondence Date	Agencies Involved	Topics
May 17, 2002	Illinois State Geologic Survey (ISGS)	IDOT Memorandum-PESA Review.
May 21, 2002	IDNR	Memorandum from IDNR providing clarification to questions on the IDNR Action Report. (Attached to this memorandum is a June 24, 2002, transmittal memorandum from IDOT.)
November 6, 2002	ISGS	IDOT Memorandum-PESA Review.
November 8, 2002	ISGS	Letter transmittal of ISGS deliverables to the IL 29 project.
April 16, 2003	IDNR-INHS	Letter transmittal of the Assessment of the Biological Resources Report from IDNR.
July 21, 2003	Marshall-Putnam Soil and Water Conservation District	Letter from Marshall-Putnam Soil and Water Conservation District opposing the proposed improvements.
February 2, 2004	IDNR	Letter from IDNR requesting a hydrology study along parts of the Miller-Anderson Woods Nature Preserve.
March 12, 2004	IDNR, INPC, ISGS	Meeting to discuss groundwater equilibrium concern that could arise from widening IL 29 from two to four lanes in the area of Miller-Anderson Woods.
May 3, 2004	Bureau County Farm Service, Marshall and Putnam County Farm Service, Peoria County Farm Service	Letter to county farm services requesting information for agricultural assessment.
May 11, 2004	IDNR	Meeting to solicit input on current and future access points to their property.
August 26, 2004	ISGS	IDOT Memorandum-PESA Review.
September 14, 2004	INPC, IDNR, Illinois Emergency Management Agency	Meeting to discuss process and procedures to determine floodplain impacts and compensation along IL 29 corridor.
October 4, 2004	IDNR	Meeting to present the current IL 29 design, discuss potential impacts to IDNR properties and natural areas, and to receive feedback on potential mitigation. In late 2003, a field review was conducted with IDNR to refine the boundaries of IDNR properties and natural areas south of Sparland.
October 5, 2004	USFWS	Letter from USFWS identifying species, listed or proposed to be listed, that may be present in project area.
November 9, 2004	Section 4(f) Applicability Review-FHWA	Meeting to discuss the applicability of the Section 4(f) regulations to the parks, recreation and wildlife refuges, and historic properties in the project area.
November 23, 2004	FHWA	Meeting to discuss the potential floodplain impacts associated with the proposed improvements.
December 15, 2004	NRCS	Meeting to discuss potential project impacts on NRCS improvements along Crow Creek, Senachwine Creek, and other environmental features in the project area.
January 26, 2005	IDNR, Office of Water Resources	Letter from the Office of Water Resources concerning four potential longitudinal encroachments associated with proposed improvements and applicability of Part 3700 floodway construction rules.

TABLE 4-3
Other Agency Coordination

Meeting/ Correspondence Date	Agencies Involved	Topics
March 3, 2005	IDNR, Office of Water Resources	E-mail from the Office of Water Resources indicating that the area near Route 29 bypass crossing and longitudinal encroachment along Senachwine Creek (South) is rural. Therefore rural area floodway criteria would apply to the floodway/floodplain filling along Senachwine Creek (South).
March 9, 2005	Illinois Historic Preservation Agency (IHPA)	Concurrence from IHPA that four of the five structures in the project area identified as potentially eligibility to the National Register of Historic Place do not to meet the criteria for listing. The fifth property, Whiffle Tree Place, was identified as significant under Criterion C; this property will not be affected by the proposed improvements.

The following technical reports were prepared in conjunction with the study.

- The consultant team collected Farm Service Agency information for completion of the USDA/NRCS AD 1006 form. IDOA prepared the USDA/NRCS AD 1006 form, based on input from and coordination between IDOT, IDOA, and NRCS (Appendix B).
- The Illinois Natural History Survey prepared an assessment of wetland and biological resources in the study area.
- The ISGS prepared hydrology studies along part of Miller-Anderson Woods Nature Preserve and also three preliminary environmental site assessments summarizing the special and hazardous waste in the project area.
- The ISGS provided IDOT with data about geology and soils in the project area. The consultant team prepared a geotechnical report from this information.
- The consultant team prepared a photo log of historic structures and submitted it to IDOT's Cultural Resources Unit. The University of Illinois's Transportation Archaeological Research Program investigated archaeological resources and prepared an interim report summarizing its findings. The consultant team prepared a report identifying structures on or potentially eligibility for the National Register of Historic Place. Cultural resources subject to the provisions of Section 106 of the Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966 were coordinated with the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, as discussed in Section 3.4 Cultural Resources.

4.3 Community Involvement

4.3.1 Community Officials

Numerous meetings were held with community and elected officials during the course of the study to understand their issues and concerns. The meetings included representatives from Marshall County, Lacon, Henry, Sparland, and Chillicothe. Table 4-4 summarizes the meetings and the correspondence received from local agencies.

TABLE 4-4
Community Officials

Meeting/ Correspondence Date	Community	Topics
October 2, 2002	Chillicothe, Henry, Lacon, Sparland, Marshall County	Meeting to introduce the study, discuss existing traffic patterns, and any proposed city plans.
October 8, 2002	Lacon	Letter of support for widening IL 29.
October 8, 2002	Marshall County	Letter and resolution of support for widening IL 29 along its existing alignment.
May 12, 2003	Henry	Resolution in support of the IL 29 improvements.
June 10, 2003	Bureau County	Resolution of support for IL 29 improvements.
July 3, 2003	Chillicothe	Meeting to discuss the study progress, proposed alternatives, and proposed city plans.
August 20, 2003	Henry Senachwine Community School District 5	Resolution of support for IL 29 improvements.
September 8, 2003	Chillicothe	Letter of support for improvements to IL 29; includes a bypass resolution survey conducted by the Chillicothe Area Chamber of Commerce.
Spring 2004	Sparland	Meeting to discuss the study progress, and interchange options near Sparland.
July 7, 2004	Chillicothe, Henry, Lacon, Sparland, Marshall County	Preview of the materials to be presented at Public Information Meeting #2.
July 14, 2004	Bureau County	Letter supporting the IL 29 project.
July 19, 2004	Sparland	Letter opposing improvements to IL 29; notes that if the improvements are built the City supports an alignment west or east of Sparland.
August 31, 2004	Henry Township	Letter distributing a resolution not supporting the improvement of IL 29.
September 16, 2004	Chillicothe	Meeting to discuss growth issues and the project's potential to cause secondary development.
November 18, 2004	Senachwine Township and Henry	Senachwine Township: meeting to better assess the applicability of Section 4(f) to the Putnam Pavilion site and ball field at the former Putnam grade school. Henry: meeting to discuss the project's potential to cause secondary development.
January 27, 2005	Sparland	Meeting to review the status of the project, and discuss the project's potential to cause secondary development in Sparland.
January 12, 2006	Senachwine Township	Meeting to discuss the applicability of Section 4(f) at the baseball field at the former Putnam grade school.

Meetings were held with various organizations to discuss how the proposed improvements may affect their organization, including railroad companies, Caterpillar, Henry Fire Protection District, Senachwine and Crow Creek Watershed committees, and the Peoria

Park District. Appendix A contains meeting minutes, and related correspondence, including correspondence from local businesses supporting the proposed improvements under Local Officials/Other Coordination.

4.3.1.1 Railroad Coordination

The project team coordinated with representatives of railroad companies potentially affected by the proposed improvements several times throughout project development. Table 4-5 summarizes the coordination points.

TABLE 4-5
Railroad Coordination

Meeting/ Correspondence Date	Company	Topics
March 11, 2003	Poly One Corporation	Letter introducing the project and the potential relocation of their tracks associated with the proposed improvements.
May 13, 2003	Poly One Corporation	Telephone conversation followup to letter of March 11, 2003. Poly One concurred that it would be acceptable for its tracks to be relocated, with IDOT paying for the relocation.
July 23, 2003	Lincoln & Southern Railroad Co.	Letter expressing ongoing interest in the study and concern that the drainage conditions along their right of way not deteriorate as a consequence of the proposed improvements.
November 10, 2004	Lincoln & Southern Railroad Co., Poly One Corporation, Iowa Interstate RR, URS/CSXT	Meeting to gain general understanding of the railroad companies and their operations, identify the proximity of the railroad tracks to proposed construction, obtain right of way, identify drainage / flooding issues, identify a future contact from each company regarding future information and reviews, and discuss the procedure for and cost to IDOT for railroads to review plan sets.

4.3.1.2 Henry Fire Protection District

Study staff met with representatives of the Henry Fire Protection District on April 22, 2004, regarding the proposed improvements and to understand how they may affect the fire district's operations. The consensus among district officials was that the proposed improvements would not adversely affect operations. See Appendix A under Local Officials/Other Coordination.

4.3.1.3 Senachwine Creek Watershed Committee

Staff met with representatives of the Senachwine Creek Watershed Committee on May 6, 2004, regarding the proposed improvements and to understand how they may affect projects planned by the committee. The committee has received funds to install holding basins, detention ponds, willows, and terraces to minimize the effects of hard rains and flooding. After reviewing the design plans, representatives commented that they would like to work with IDOT on any planned mitigation in the area. See Appendix A under Local Officials/Other Coordination.

4.3.1.4 Crow Creek Watershed Committee

Staff met with representatives of the Crow Creek Watershed Committee on February 23, 2005, to update the committee on the proposed improvements to IL 29 adjacent to Crow Creek (Camp Grove Road to Old IL 29) and to confirm that the project would not affect projects funded by the committee in the watershed. See Appendix A under Local Officials/Other Coordination.

4.3.1.5 Caterpillar

On January 5, 2004, IDOT received a letter from Caterpillar confirming a phone conversation of December 23, 2003. During the phone conversation Caterpillar representatives expressed support for an alternative that would pass to the west and north of the Caterpillar property, identified as alignment S-6B on Exhibit 2-9. (At the time of the telephone conversation this alignment was referred to as Alignment 1.) See Appendix A under Local Officials/Other Coordination.

4.3.1.6 Peoria Park District

Staff met with representatives of the Peoria Park District on September 9, 2004, to learn more about their concerns following the second public information meeting as expressed in a letter dated August 27, 2004. During the meeting the park district provided additional information on its three properties near the project's south section, Camp Wokanda, Singing Woods Nature Preserve, and Audubon Wildlife Area. See Appendix A under Local Officials/Other Coordination.

4.3.2 Public Meetings

Two sets of public information meetings were held during the study. Meetings were announced through advertisements in area newspapers and project newsletters. Because of the project length and number of communities involved, each meeting was held in two locations in the project corridor. The sessions were held in open house format.

4.3.2.1 First Set of Public Meetings

The first set of public meetings was held on June 11, 2003, in Henry and on June 12 in Chillicothe to review the status of the project, to obtain public input on the preliminary and reasonable range of alternatives, and to offer a forum for people to ask questions. The meetings were publicized through advertisements in five local newspapers: *Lacon Home Journal*, *Bureau County Republican*, *Bureau Valley Chief*, *Chillicothe Times-Bulletin*, and *Henry News Republican*. Project newsletters announcing the meeting were sent to property owners, local units of government, utilities, state agencies, elected officials, and other interest groups. Meeting exhibits included aerial photography of the project area depicting project alternatives, information comparing project alternative impacts, and project schedule. The meeting in Henry was attended by 326 people, the meeting in Chillicothe by 427 people.

Two hundred forty-nine comments were submitted following the public meetings. Public comments, IDOT's responses and a summary of the public comments are found on the compact disk in Appendix A. Most comments related to the project in general or to a specific alternative. Roughly 58 percent related to the IL 29 project in general, 6 percent to the Rome and Chillicothe alignment alternatives, 24 percent to the Hopewell and Sparland

alignment alternatives, 9 percent to the Henry alignment alternatives, and the remainder to Putnam alignment alternatives.

Comments received at the first meetings pertained to the following issues:

- Support for an IL 29 alternative that would cost less than building a new road and improve economic vitality of the area
- Concern about impact to natural resources (for example, wetlands, water supply, timber, wildlife, soil erosion, Illinois River)
- Concern about cost
- Concern about impact to farmland and irrigation systems
- Concern about residential displacements, property values, and noise
- Concern about access points/interchanges if a limited-access highway is recommended
- Concern about traffic need and safety

4.3.2.2 Second Set of Public Meetings

The second set of public meetings was held on July 14, 2004, in Henry and on July 15 in Chillicothe to present the refined alternatives. The meetings were publicized through advertisements in eight local newspapers: *Peoria Journal Star*, *Lacon Home Journal*, *Bureau County Republican*, *Bureau Valley Chief*, *Chillicothe Times-Bulletin*, *News Tribune*, *Chillicothe Independent*, and *Henry News Republican*. Project newsletters announcing the meeting were sent to property owners, local units of government, utilities, state agencies, elected officials, and other interest groups. Five local radio and three TV stations were notified about the meeting. Meeting exhibits included aerial photography of the project area depicting project alternatives, information comparing project alternative impacts, and project schedule. The meeting in Henry was attended by 176 people, the meeting in Chillicothe by 408 people.

More than 170 comments were submitted following the public meetings. Public comments and a summary of the comments are found on the compact disk in Appendix A. Most comments at the meeting related to the project in general or a specific alternative. Roughly 47 percent related to the IL 29 project in general, 20 percent to the Rome and Chillicothe alignment alternatives, 18 percent to the Hopewell and Sparland alignment alternatives, and 3 percent to the Henry alignment alternatives. The remainder were not related to a specific improvement (for example, a request for project information).

Comments received at the second meetings pertained to the following issues:

- Support for an improved IL 29 facility with 4 lanes and limited access
- Improvement of IL 29 as soon as possible
- Concern about the expense of the project; improve existing roads
- Concern about traffic need and safety
- Access from IL 29 on new alignment to existing IL 29
- Concern about impact to farmland and irrigation systems
- Concern about impacts to natural areas and other environmental resources
- Concern about residential displacements, property values, noise, and wells

4.3.3 Project Newsletters

Project newsletters were prepared and distributed during the course of the study. The newsletters were sent to local units of government (county, municipal, drainage districts, townships), review agencies, federal and state officials, utilities, and project area residents.

The first newsletter (June 2003) introduced the project, the study team, and the first public information meeting. It provided an overview of the project development process and where this study was relative to that process, described the features of the study, explained the public and agency involvement process, and announced the study schedule. The newsletter contained a self-addressed form for submitting comments. It also provided a project contact name and telephone number.

The second newsletter (June 2004) announced the dates and locations of the second public meetings, described the corridor alternatives that would be presented, and provided a map detailing alternatives. It also contained the self-addressed form for submitting comments, and a contact name and telephone number.